

Migration, Immigration & Settlement

The Migration of Abuse

Migration

In 2000, an estimated “175 million people lived outside their place of birth, more than ever before” (Doyle, 2004, p.1). From this number, 158 million people “were deemed as international migrants; approximately 16 million were recognized as refugees fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution” (Doyle, 2004, p. 1).

Migration is affected by changes in immigration policies in other countries. Some examples include: the opening of borders that were previously closed; conflicts in certain regions of the world or from within the nation and provinces/territories; economic globalization of the nation; political and economic oppression and/or repression (Sokoloff & Pratt, 2005).

Reactive migration is largely caused by “political upheavals [which] have generated ethnic conflicts and civil wars” and this is evident by the number of displaced individuals in the world (Richmond, 2002, p. 717). As Immigrants and Refugees settle in their new country, they create more diversity within the nation. As a result, the nation’s identity is transformed and racial, cultural and ethnic boundaries slowly become blurred (Castles, 1998). These changes are enriching, however, the mainstream population can sometimes feel threatened depending on the rate that the change is taking place and the level of acceptance within the population.

Settlement in Canada

The Canadian government views immigration into Canada through the lens of economic and population growth. As a growing nation, Canada benefits from immigration. Canada uses newcomers to assist in tasks and employment which citizens are not willing to undertake. Immigrants to Canada are seen as investments into the country’s future.

The responsibility for immigration is shared between the federal and provincial governments in Canada. Citizenship and Immigration Canada manages the selection and the admission aspects of Immigrants to Canada. The federal government is largely responsible for funding,

providing initial support for Refugees, and welcoming those who are arriving into Canada. The federal government also records who is entering Canada for research purposes and collects data on immigration trends and where newcomers settle within the country.

Settlement services for Refugees are facilitated by the federal government. Settlement is the process of adaptation to a new country after one immigrates. For other Immigrants, community-based organizations specialize in offering support and referrals, solutions to re-settlement, basic adjustment and integration.

British Columbia (BC) welcomes approximately 40,000 immigrants a year (Landed Immigrant Data (LIDS), Ministry of Attorney General, April 2005). In BC, the Ministry of Attorney General is responsible for Multiculturalism and Settlement and funds the BC Settlement and Adaptation Program (BCSAP). The primary goal of this program is facilitating successful settlement and adaptation for new Immigrants and Refugees to BC (Welcome BC, 2010). The funding for settlement services is an agreement between BC and the federal government, whereby the federal government transfers money to provinces and territories who then decide how the money will be allocated.

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Settlement in BC is divided into five streams by BCSAP, each of which has its own focus and goals: information and support; settlement workers in schools; community bridging services; English language services for adults; and sectoral support and delivery assistance. Another stream combines information, support and English language services for adults who face multiple barriers. Each stream attempts to meet the needs of newcomers utilizing the services while educating and introducing newcomers to Canada.

Women's Experiences of Settlement

Settlement is often a complicated and a stressful time for women and their families. Women leave their home countries for a variety of reasons and often with little or no choice. Settlement is increasingly difficult when there is a larger cultural gap between the home country and the new one. Some examples of these difficulties include limited understanding about the new culture, language, and women's roles in their new country. In addition to these difficulties, women also encounter judgment from Canadian society about their culture and ways of living.

It is important to note that "increasing numbers of both economic migrants and refugees are women" (Castles, 1998, p. 180). Recently arrived or settled women in BC have numerous presenting concerns. When establishing relationships with women a supportive, respectful, caring and honest approach is vital for trust and engagement. As a group, NSRIW may be in a more vulnerable position due to the reasons previously discussed.

Lee Lakeman (2005) states "[t]here is no state in which women have full democratic access to power, no state upholds women's rights fully, [and] no state has the full confidence of its women citizens" (p. 67). In this context, women's global lack of power has implications for NSRIW and their settlement process. This lack of power is intensified by the changing nature of the market economy and the steady intensification of globalization. Globalization has contributed to exacerbating existing inequalities in the world and workers' migration has benefited Western economies by providing cheap labour. The push to fill gaps in certain low-

skilled jobs are evident when countries look at “temporary migration to address selective shortages,” for example, in agricultural work (Biles & Burstein, 2002, p 14) or the Live-In Caregiver program in Canada. Women of colour, particularly women from the Philippines and the Caribbean, are more likely to migrate to Canada under the Live-In Caregiver program than with another program. This program restricts women’s mobility, denies women many benefits available to other Canadian workers, and restricts their ability to sponsor their families and be re-united.

NSRIW experience oppressions like inequality, discrimination, stereotyping, prejudice, sexism, racism and classism directly or indirectly during their journey to Canada, in their settlement process and as established residents. As mentioned previously, NSRIW suffer from discrimination through the process of immigration. The intensity of discrimination experienced is directly influenced by the immigration class in which they are eligible to enter the country. Access to wealth and capital is a privilege that increases mobility and access to safety. NSRIW with low incomes and less education will have fewer options to access resources that increase mobility and safety.

The influx of Immigrants and Refugees into countries, provinces, regions, cities and towns affects all communities. The effects Immigrants and Refugees can have “may reshape the national economy, transform cities and force the re-examination of social and cultural values” (Castles, 1998, p. 180). Not only do communities change, but tensions can build between the existing community and Immigrants and Refugees if the newcomers are viewed through the myth of taking gainful employment opportunities away from the existing community members. This renders already vulnerable migrant workers to further discrimination. Richmond describes how the movement of workers from developing nations “has been resisted by governments and unionized workers in wealthy countries [because] labour unions and individual employees feel threatened by the competition from cheap labour in other countries, as well as migrant workers in their own” (2002, p. 715).

Some low-paying employment sectors have a disproportionate number of Immigrant and Refugee men and women. These jobs include, but are not limited to, janitorial work, taxi drivers, farm labourers, warehouse workers, caregivers and fast food restaurant workers. Such jobs often have a low rate of pay, long hours, lack of benefits and often require shift work. NSRIW are often underemployed and remain working in these sectors throughout their work life. This underemployment is due to many reasons. Among them, the refusal to recognize women’s education, credentials, and past work experience forces women to undergo the expensive process of re-credentialing and re-training in Canada. This lack of recognition is deeply rooted in a Eurocentric bias.

The impact of working a low-wage job with long hours and no job security has multiple and specific impacts on NSRIW. Because these jobs often have irregular hours, NSRIW often lose the opportunity to learn English/French in classes with other newcomers, and to further educate themselves and therefore gain access to better employment. Most women who work outside the home maintain their dual roles within the family as caregiver and nurturer. The impact of this dual set of responsibilities means women simply do not have the time to develop social networks outside the family and they remain isolated; this factor elongates the adaptation to the new country.

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Social Attitudes and Views of Immigrant and Refugee People

Societal attitudes in Canada can negatively impact Immigrants and Refugees. For instance, currently “[one] of the ironies of a multicultural world is that, as diversity increases, so does the temptation to impose uniformity” (Richmond, 2002, p. 723). The movement towards uniform laws, policies and legislation pushes forward an effort to harmonize nations so they can collectively address similar issues in a collaborative manner. In this process, women and those with little power in society are being left out of the vision for a better world and global economy. Language can be illusory: words such as values, family, safety, privacy, and rights can appear inclusive and representative yet not address important underlying questions: Whose values? What type of family? Whose safety and rights? And whose privacy?

Canada is commonly known as a multicultural nation that is accepting of the diverse groups of people who settle here. The so-called ‘acceptance’ and ‘tolerance’ is directed towards people who are racially different and are settling in Canada. However, NSRIW and their communities are rarely asked questions such as: What does being accepted into society truly look like? Do you feel accepted? What are you pressured to give up in order to be ‘tolerated’?

The terms ‘immigrant’ and ‘refugee’ are not neutral words. These words are used to classify and group people into categories in order to establish hierarchies of power. For example, first generation White Europeans are rarely viewed as Immigrants. On the contrary, multiple generations of Canadian-born people of colour continue to be seen as Immigrants. Racialized people are more likely to be frequently labeled as ‘Immigrants’ or ‘Refugees.’ NSRIW may feel pressured to blend in more with Western ways, whether in dress or to speak English/French, in order to have an easier time adjusting and moving beyond the labels of ‘Immigrant’ and ‘Refugee’.

Racism in BC

In BC, there is a continuum of beliefs about where newcomers should settle and who should come into BC. There are citizens who do not want people from certain parts of the world settling anywhere in BC. Racist movements exist in BC and are a reflection of social attitudes and racist belief systems. This obscures the reality of colonization in Canada as the only people who have not immigrated to Canada are First Nations people.

It is a dehumanizing and humiliating feeling to be hated based upon the color of your skin or because of the perception of difference. Hate is intense, deep and scary for those on the receiving end. In the handbook for service providers called *Responding to Incidents of Racism and Hate* (2003), hate is defined as “[when] prejudice and discrimination come together in behavior and actions that are criminal in nature, racism then takes the form of hate” (p.7). Hate can take place on a person as well as in a group environment. The *Responding to Incidents of Racism and Hate* (2003) handbook indicates that there “are more than 50 active white supremacist organizations in Canada today, ranging from Christian Identity, to neo-Nazi and racist skinhead groups” (p. 8).

Institutional and systemic racism can have discriminatory outcomes. Jiwani points out that “racism is not readily acknowledged or recognized as a form of systemic, institutional and daily violence” (2005, p. 846-47). Systemic racism has concrete and devastating affects on people’s

lives. These impacts can include less access to housing or employment, barriers accessing the legal system or experiences of discrimination in the legal system, and experiences of violence.

Dealing with private and public displays of hate can be disturbing and frightening as newcomers to BC. The impacts of racism are traumatic experiences that strongly impact people's lives and feelings and will take time to heal.

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