THE ROLE OF CHURCHES IN IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENT

Rich Janzen, PhD, is Research Director at the Centre for Community Based Research and Adjunct Assistant Professor at Renison University College at the University of Waterloo. Rich leads the national research partnership "The role of churches in immigrant settlement and integration".

Alethea Stobbe, M.S.W. is a Researcher at the Centre for Community Based Research and a graduate of the Master of Social Work program at the University of Toronto.

Frédéric Dejean, PhD, is a senior researcher at the Research Institute on Professional Integration of Immigrants / Institut de recherche sur l'intégration professionnelle des Immigrants, at Collège de Maisonneuve, Montréal

Joanna Ochocka, PhD, is Executive Director at the Centre for Community Based Research and Adjunct Associate Professor at Renison University College at the University of Waterloo.

In this article we consider the role of Christian churches as immigrant settlement partners. We discuss this role by answering three questions: *1)* why we should consider churches as settlement partners, *2)* what we know about churches as settlement partners and *3)* how a national and interdenominational research partnership is responding to the need to equip churches as settlement partners. Given both historical and recent trends, we argue that Canadian churches have the potential to contribute to the settlement of immigrants. However, we know very little about how Canadian churches are presently playing this role, or what is required to better equip them as settlement partners. We introduce a new community-university research partnership that intends to address these gaps.

WHY CONSIDER CHURCHES AS SETTLEMENT PARTNERS?

BECAUSE OF HISTORY...

Christian churches and other faith groups have a strong tradition of participating in community-building. In both Canada and the United States faith groups were at the heart of the rise of social service provision in the latter 19th century and early 20th century (Unruh & Sider, 2005). They were also leaders in national social reform and social justice movements (Christie & Gauvreau, 2000) and worked to improve the moral and spiritual well-being of their respective societies (Reimer, 2003).

This traditional social concern of faith-groups (including churches) has encompassed immigrants. As a historic immigrant-receiving country, Canadian nation-building has long-benefitted from the contribution of churches in assisting immigrants and refugees to settle and integrate into their new homeland. For example, churches have often acted as a transitional social space for immigrants. Ethno-specific churches have provided a way for immigrants to build their social networks, building their social capital as they bond with others of similar faith and cultural background (Ley, 2008). Churches also functioned as a bridge to the broader society by broadening social networks, by facilitating social mobility and by using institutional power to foster positive public opinion (Appleby, 2011; Cadge et al., 2013). In addition, churches have acted in many practical ways, including developing inner-city networks of immigrant support (Janzen, 2011; Vaughan, 2009), pursuing refugee sponsorship and advocating for refugee rights (McKinlay, 2008; Thompson, 2010) and providing physical space for newcomer congregations (Reimer & Wilkinson, 2010).

Despite this historic contribution from churches, in the past 40 years publically-funded and professionalized settlement services grew to dominate the immigrant settlement sector (Tam, 2003). This shift coincided with Federal policy designed to provide public funds in order to assist immigrants and refugees settle into Canadian society (CIC, 2010a). For example, Federal government settlement allocations (outside of Québec) have more than tripled, from less than $200M in 2005–06 to $600M for 2011 (CIC, 2010b). The shift also mirrored a more general societal trend which saw the increasing secularization of social services across North America as part of a "de-Christianizing" process within many Western countries (Cnaan & Boddie, 2006). In Canada, the moral grounding for such a shift was bolstered by perceptions of intolerant and dominating practices of the privileged Christian establishment towards non-Christian minority groups (Biles, Tolley & Ibrahim, 2005; Seljak, et al., 2008).

BECAUSE OF RECENT POLICY TRENDS...

Recent changes in the Canadian landscape have opened the door for churches to again become recognized as part of the settlement sector mainstream. In particular, three policy trends are worth noting. In presenting these we are not arguing that churches have stopped their settlement work and are only now ready to pick it up once again. Instead, we see these policy trends as laying the foundation for today's churches to find their renewed place among others when developing settlement partnerships.

The first trend relates to funding within the settlement sector. Increasingly it is being recognized that government-funded professionalized settlement services are only one part of the system of support needed by immigrants (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2011; Janzen, Walton-Roberts & Ochocka, 2012). For example, over the past decade, Canadian communities have responded to immigrant unemployment by establishing immigrant employment councils in which private, public and non-profit sectors collaborate (Janzen, Walton-Roberts & Ochocka, 2012; Wayland, 2006). In the past four years, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has begun funding municipalities in some jurisdictions to establish cross-sectoral immigration partnerships (CIC, 2010b; CIC, 2011). Within this context, faith-based groups are again being called on to be a resource for immigrant settlement and integration (Seljak, 2009). For example, the CIC-funded North Toronto Immigration Partnership recently (2013) held a "Faith and Welcoming Communities Forum" to explore the role of faith groups (including churches) within the local settlement network.

Spurred by the events of 9/11, a second policy trend relates to a more "open secularism". This position holds that matters of faith should no longer be excluded from the public domain (Habermas, 2006). Instead, there are calls within Canadian policy circles that diverse religious traditions should be invited to shape an increasingly pluralistic society (Seljak, et al., 2008). This position is certainly not unanimous within Canada, most notably in Québec. From 2006 to 2008, the so-called "crise des accomodements raisonnables" (reasonable accommodations crisis) revealed that the place of religion in the public space was still a very thorny issue (Potvin, 2010). And the recent, but failed, secular charter proposed by the Parti Quebecois represented a concerted effort to deepen secularism, whether as a liberal concept of of "laicite" (secularity) or as a more French republican conception in which religion should stay strictly a private matter (Maclure & Taylor, 2011). But the point is, within Canada a renewed conversation is taking place about the relationship between faith and society – a conversation that has created (and may well continue to create) greater space for faith groups to be seen as partners for the public good.

The third policy trend is related to research. In 2002 the Social Science and Humanities Research Council's (SSHRC) acknowledged that there was a notable lack of religion within immigration scholarship. Since then, there has been a marked increase in research studies that explored the role of faith and religion within a diverse society (e.g., Bramadat & Biles, 2005; Conner, 2009; Koenig, 2005). Long-term research agendas include the SSHRC-funded *Religion and Diversity Project* launched in 2010 as a seven-year Major Collaborative Research Initiative viewing religious diversity as a resource (not as a problem). The *dimensions du pluralisme religieux québécois* (2006-2013) was also funded by SSHRC and focused on contemporary religious diversity in Québec.

BECAUSE OF DEMOGRAPHICS...

While other faith traditions are increasing rapidly, the Christian church remains by far the largest religious affiliation in Canada (Kunz, 2009). There are an estimated 30,000 religious organizations in Canada (Bibby, 2006), most of which are Christian congregations. These congregations are becoming

more ethnically diverse (Riemer & Wilkinson, 2010), including the rise of ethno-specific newcomer congregations as Christian immigrants arrive from diverse world regions. In fact, 45% of immigrants arriving between 1991-2001 reported religious affiliation with Christianity (Statistics Canada, 2003).

While there is undoubtedly a role for other faith traditions as settlement partners, the new diversified face of the Christian church in Canada represents a significant resource in providing formal programs and informal supports to help immigrants settle and integrate. This is notably true for smaller and mid-size communities which are now seeking to attract immigrants and where the professionalized system of support is much less developed.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT CHURCHES AS SETTLEMENT PARTNERS?

WE LACK COMPREHENSIVE KNOWLEDGE...

Very few national empirical studies have considered immigrant settlement in relation to Canada's most common religious settings—Christian churches. The studies that do exist focus on individual Christian denominations or within single geographic communities. These studies provide valuable insight into the potential of churches to successfully work with immigrants as they settle in specific Canadian cities. However, without national and interdenominational vantage point, the ability to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the role of Canadian churches in helping immigrants to settle is limited. In addition, more understanding is needed about how this role uniquely fits into broader settlement landscape.

CHURCHES NEED TO BE BETTER EQUIPPED TO BECOME SETTLEMENT PARTNERS...

In 2010 World Vision funded *Welcoming Churches*, the first known national and interdenominational study about how churches across denominations are responding to the diversified immigrant reality in Canada. Findings showed that church leaders were beginning to cast a new vision about the church's relationship to cultural, racial and religious diversity, but were much further behind in implementing supporting structures and processes. When they were providing programming, churches were doing better at responding to the immediate settlement needs of immigrants upon arrival than supporting the longer-term integration of immigrants (hence the title of the final report: "*Beyond the Welcome*") (Janzen, Dildar, & Araujo, 2010). Often the supports provided were informal and relationally-based, with these supports being increasingly found within newcomer congregations. However, the study also revealed that many churches were struggling to know how to respond to the diversity around them. In particular, churches acknowledged that they needed to be better equipped in order to see themselves as supporting immigrant settlement and integration in a consistent way.

HOW IS A NEW RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP RESPONDING?

BY BEING NATIONAL AND INTERDENOMINATIONAL IN SCOPE...

Building on the previous Welcoming Churches study, a new community-university research partnership is addressing the gaps above. Leading Canadian academics in the field of religion and diversity together with leaders of national denominations and major Canadian interdenominational networks have embarked on a two-year (2013-2015) project funded by SSHRC. The research is national in scope, while also focusing on selected sites across the country (Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Moncton and Halifax).

BY FOCUSING ON EQUIPPING CHURCHES...

The purpose of this research partnership is to help equip church groups across Canada to better work with today's immigrants in ways that are respectful and relevant. Consistent with the ecological framework of the "Welcoming Churches" study (Janzen, Chapman, & Watson, 2012), churches will clarify their settlement role by considering three domains:

- Vision (the articulation of values, attitudes and beliefs that provide direction for churches in supporting immigrant settlement);
- Structures (settings, activities and partnerships that facilitate churches in working with immigrants); and
- Processes (actions that prepare and equip churches to meaningfully work with immigrants). These three domains apply equally to the congregational, denominational and interdenominational levels.

BY USING AN EVIDENCED-BASED AND ENGAGING APPROACH...

This community-university research initiative has a research and engagement agenda. The first year has focused on research activities to allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the role of Canadian churches in helping immigrants to settle and to integrate. The mixed methods design will included: an international literature review, a national survey of denominations across Canada and individual interviews with national denominational/ interdenominational leaders. In addition each of the five selected sites will conducted focus groups and case studies of promising practice. In year two, partners will share what they have learned using various written formats and organizing and participating in events across Canada. Both research and knowledge mobilization activities will be guided by a community-based research approach that emphasizes that research be participatory, action-oriented and relevant (Ochocka & Janzen, 2014). This initiative hopes to grow and to involve others interested in equipping church groups to better work with today's immigrants.

CONCLUSION

The immigrant settlement sector is moving toward a greater emphasis on cross-sectoral collaboration, as evidenced by this special CDC issue on settlement partnerships. At the same time, Christian churches in Canada are in a period of transition as they attempt to adapt to their new pluralistic context. It is timely that churches build on their historic traditions and explore their new place as settlement partners. We invite interested others to join in this exploration, with opportunities for involvement outlined on our project website at: www.communitybasedresearch.ca/Page/View/PDG.

REFERENCES

APPLEBY, J. (2011). The role of the Catholic Church in immigrant integration. The Review of Faith and International Affairs, 9(1), 67-70.

BIBBY, R. (2006). The boomer factor: What Canada's most famous generation is leaving behind. Toronto: Bastian Books.

BILES, J., TOLLEY, E., & IBRAHIM, H., (2005). Does Canada have a multicultural future? Canadian Diversity/Diversite Canadienne, 4(1), 23-28.

BRAMADAT, P. & BILES, J. (Eds) (2005). The re-emergence of religion in international public discourse, Journal of International Migration and Integration, 6, 171–289.

CADGE, W., LEVITT., P., JAWORSKY, B., CLEVENGER, C. (2013). Religious dimensions of contexts of reception: Comparing two New England cities. International Migration, 51(3), p. 84-98.

CHRISTIE, N., & GAUVREAU, M. (2000). A full-orbed Christianity: The protestant churches and social welfare in Canada, 1900-1940. Manitoba History, 39, 47-9.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (2009). Facts and figures: Immigration overview - permanent and temporary residents. Ottawa: Citizenship and Immigration Canada [producer]. Distribution Services [distributor].Retrieved from: www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/research-stats/facts2008.pdf

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (2010a). Annual report to parliament on immigration. Retrieved from: www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/immigration2010_e.pdf

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (2010b). Government of Canada 2011-12 settlement funding allocations. Retrieved from: www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/backgrounders/2010/2010-12-07.asp

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION CANADA (November 25, 2011). News Release. Retrieved from: www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/immigration2010_e.pdf

CONNER, P. (2009). Immigrant religiosity in Canada: Multiple trajectories. Journal of International Migration and Integration, 10, 159-175.

CNAAN, R.A., & BODDIE, S.C. (2006). Setting the context: Assessing the effectiveness of faith-based social services. Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work. 25(3-4), 5-18.

FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES (2011). Starting on solid ground: The municipal role in immigrant settlement. Ottawa, ON.

HABERMAS, J. (2006). Religion in the public sphere. European Journal of Philosophy, 14(1), 1-25.

JANZEN, R., CHAPMAN, M., & WATSON, J. (2012). Integrating immigrants into the life of Canadian urban Christian congregations: Findings from a national survey. Review of Religious Research. 53(4), 441-470.

JANZEN, R., WALTON-ROBERTS, M., & OCHOCKA, J. (2012). Immigrant integration and inclusion in Waterloo Region. In J. Biles & C. Andrews (Eds.) Immigration, integration and inclusion in Ontario Cities. Montreal PQ: McGill-Queen's University Press.

JANZEN, R. (2011). Reaching out to multicultural neighbour: Stories that evaluate and encourage innovative church outreach. Unpublished dissertation. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University.

JANZEN, R., DILDAR, Y., & ARAUJO, L. (2010). Beyond the welcome: Churches responding to the immigrant reality in Canada. Kitchener, ON: Centre for Community Based Research. Retrieved from: www.worldvision.ca/Programs-and-Projects/Canadian-Programs/Documents/BeyondTheWelcome-2011-FullReport.pdf

KOENIG, M. (Ed.) (2005). Negotiating religious pluralism: International approaches, Canadian Diversity, 4(3), 1–96.

KUNZ, J. (2009). Religious Diversity in a multicultural Canada: Quos vidas? Policy Horizons Canada. 10(2), Religious Diversity in Canada. Retrieved from: www.horizons.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=2009-0008_04

LEY, D. (2008). The immigrant church as an urban service hub. Urban Studies. 45(10), 2057-2074.

MACLURE, J. & TAYLOR, C. (2011). Secularism and Freedom of Conscience. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

MCKINLAY, C. (2008). Welcoming the stranger: The Canadian church and the private sponsorship of refugees program. Master's Thesis. Toronto, ON: Ryerson University.

OCHOCKA, J., & JANZEN, R. (2014). Breathing life into theory: Illustrations of community-based research hallmarks, functions, and phases. Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement, 7, 18-33.

POTVIN, M. (2010). Social and media discourse in the reasonable accommodations debate. Our Diverse Cities, 7, 78-83.

REIMER, S. (2003). Evangelicals and the continental divide: The conservative protestant subculture in Canada and the United States. Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press.

REIMER, S., & WILKINSON, M. (2010) A demographic look at evangelical congregations. Church & Faith Trends, 3(2), 21 pp. Retrieved from: files.efc-canada.net/min/rc/cft/V03I02/Demographic_Look_Evangelical_Congregations-CECS.pdf

SELJAK, D., RENNICK, J.B., SCHMIDT, A., DA SILVA., & BRAMADAT, P. (2008). Religion and multiculturalism in Canada: The challenge of religious intolerance and discrimination. Presentation at the Metropolis Justice Seminar Forum. Retrieved from: canada.metropolis.net/policypriority/justice_seminar_form/presentations/Religious_Discrimination_in_Canada_e.ppt.

SELJAK, D. (2009). Dialogue among the religions in Canada. Policy Horizons Canada. 10(2), Religious Diversity in Canada. Retrieved from: www.horizons.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=2009-0008_07

STATISTICS CANADA (2003). 2001 Census: Religions in Canada. Catalogue no. 96F0030XIE2001015, Retrieved from: www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Analytic/companion/rel/canada.cfm

TAM, M.W. (2003). National settlement and standards framework. Discussion paper prepared for the National Settlement Conference II, Calgary. National VSI Working Group IV on Settlement Standards, Professionalization and Accountability. Retrieved from: integration-net.ca/english/ini/vsi-isb/conference2/pdf/p04.pdf

THOMPSON, A. (2010). In defence of principles: NGOs and human rights in Canada. Vancouver: UBC Press.

UNRUH, H. R., & SIDER, R. J. (2005). Saving souls, serving society: Understanding the faith factor in church-based social ministry. New York: Oxford University Press.

VAUGHAN, C. (2009). Toward strengthening the local church in Hamilton, Ontario in its missional endeavors with immigrants and refugees. Doctoral dissertation. Fuller Theological Seminary.

WAYLAND, S. (2006). Unsettled: Legal and policy barriers for newcomers to Canada. Ottawa, ON: Community Foundations of Canada and the Law Commission of Canada.

LE RÔLE DES ÉGLISES LORS DE L'ÉTABLISSEMENT DES IMMIGRANTS

Rich Janzen, Ph. D., est directeur de recherche au Centre for Community Based Research et professeur agrégé adjoint au Collège de l'Université Renison de l'Université de Waterloo. Rich est en charge du partenariat national de recherche intitulé « Le rôle des églises lors de l'établissement et de l'intégration des immigrants ».

Alethea Stobbe est chercheuse au Centre for Community Based Research et elle a obtenu une maîtrise en travail social de l'Université de Toronto.

Frédéric Dejean, Ph. D., est un chercheur principal à l'Institut de recherche sur l'intégration professionnelle des immigrants/Institute on Professional Integration of Immigrants, au Collège de Maisonneuve, à Montréal.

Joanna Ochocka, Ph. D., est directrice générale au Centre for Community Based Research et professeure agrégée adjointe au Collège Renison de l'Université de Waterloo.

Dans cet article, nous considérons le rôle des églises chrétiennes en tant que partenaires de l'établissement des immigrants. Nous discutons de ce rôle à la lumière de trois questions : *1)* pourquoi nous devrions considérer les églises comme des partenaires en établissement, *2)* ce que nous savons à propos des églises en tant que partenaires en établissement, et *3)* comment un partenariat de recherche national et interconfessionnel répond au besoin de mieux équiper les églises à devenir des partenaires en établissement. Compte tenu des tendances récentes et passées, nous sommes de l'avis que les églises canadiennes ont le potentiel de contribuer au processus d'établissement des immigrants. Cependant, nos connaissances sont limitées au sujet de la façon dont les églises canadiennes jouent actuellement ce rôle, ou ce qui doit être fait pour qu'elles soient mieux préparées en tant que partenaires en établissement. Nous allons discuter d'un nouveau partenariat de recherche entre le milieu universitaire et la communauté dont l'objectif est de combler ces lacunes.

POURQUOI CONSIDÉRER LES ÉGLISES COMME PARTENAIRES DE L'ÉTABLISSEMENT DES IMMIGRANTS ?

À CAUSE DE L'HISTOIRE...

Les églises chrétiennes et autres groupes confessionnels ont toujours participé au développement de la communauté. Au Canada ainsi qu'aux États-Unis, les groupes confessionnels étaient au cœur du développement de services sociaux à la fin du 19e siècle et au début au début du 20e siècle (Unruh et Sider, 2005). Ils ont également été à la tête de réformes sociales et de mouvements de justice sociale à travers la nation (Christie et Gauvreau, 2000) et ils ont travaillé afin d'améliorer le bien-être moral et spirituel de leurs sociétés respectives (Reimer, 2003).